

INTER AND INTRA-CULTURE-BASED GROUP DISCUSSION TO PROMOTE LEARNING AUTONOMY IN A BICULTURAL CLASS

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Abstract: Learning as a systematic change in knowledge, insights, behavior, and motivation occurs either in-classroom or out-of-classroom context. However, for bicultural class consisting of Indonesian and Thai EFL students in Indonesian context, to achieve such goals of learning is challenging, since the EFL students staying in such a class comprising those from two different cultural backgrounds faced some underlying learning problems. Therefore, to establish learning autonomy is significant. This article is then aimed at exploring inter and intra-culture-based group discussion which proved to be able to promote their learning autonomy. This research conducted qualitatively through observation, interview, and questionnaire revealed that the learning problems found in a bicultural class i.e. learning readiness, learning style, learning habits, and motivation can be solved by building and implementing both *inter and intra-culture-based group discussion* conducted in and outside classroom settings. This finding can be considered as important insight to create EFL students' learning autonomy which contributes to prevent them from encountering learning problems in a bicultural class so that the EFL learning goals can be better achieved.

Keywords: *inter culture based group discussion, intra culture based group discussion, bicultural class, learning autonomy*

INTRODUCTION

Taking a look at the global phenomenon that the world population has significantly increased, the interaction among the members of this global society has rapidly changed as well. The technology advancement has supported this rapid growth of social interaction as well. People coming from a certain country with a specific cultural background can easily interact for economic, social, political, or educational interests. Culture is the characteristic and knowledge of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts (Zimmerman, 2015). It is a people's way of life--the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next. Some countries may share many attributes that help mold their cultures (the modifiers may be language, religion, geographical location, etc.).

Culture can be simply defined as "what people think, make, and do (Bodley, 1994). Countries as according to Hofstede¹ (1997) may be grouped by similarities in values and attitudes. Fewer differences may be expected when moving within a cluster than when moving from one cluster to another. As the world becomes more interconnected, students- specifically EFL students- need to have an awareness to understand that it is more important than ever for them to be able to activate their "cultural antennas" to understand not only other cultures, but their own as well. In doing so, they will be better prepared to participate more fully in the global community – of which their local community is a part.

Moreover, in response to the dream of State Islamic Institute of Tulungagung, Indonesia to be "a world class university, it has invited overseas students, so far from Pattani, Thailand- for the scholarship to continue their studies either at Under Graduate or Post Graduate Programs available in this institution. One of the Study Programs attended by Pattani students is English Education Program. They are placed together with EFL learners from Indonesia in which they differ

mainly in their cultures. Then they identified themselves with more than one culture- Indonesia and Thai cultures. The class consisting of two different cultural backgrounds is called a bicultural class. It is the condition of being oneself regarding the combination of two cultures in an EFL learning context. On one hand, this bicultural identity might bring about positive effects that an EFL student acquires additional knowledge from belonging to more than one culture. However, the student may face some challenges to assimilate and adapt into the whole, collective culture in the EFL learning contexts, namely linguistics, culture and academic.

The above described condition is also revealed by Aghajanian and Cong Cong (2012) who in their study found that Chinese and Middle Eastern immigrant ELL's face challenges in those three main areas. Similarly, a study reveals that today, Chinese students are one of the largest groups of English Language Learners (ELLs) in the U.S. Children of Chinese immigrants to the U. S. face those three problems (Palmer et.al.,2006). Although, that ELL (English Language Learners) instruction does not require that teachers share the same cultural, linguistic, or ethnic membership as their students (Au and Raphael, 2000), the substantial unconstructive influence of the students cultures and the non-conductive language environment affecting their language acquisition (Marcellino, 2008). This is a considerably serious problem which inhibits the EFL learners' academic success. Accordingly, multiple solutions are addressed, including administrative support, professional development, curriculum, textbooks, media, and other literacy materials, home-school connections and community support, and provide bilingual or transitional instruction (Aghajanian and Cong Cong, 2012). One of the ways is by having group discussion. The use of group work in classroom activities has shown its usefulness in many fields of education.

Many studies reported that group discussion brought about better learning and improved level of understanding, while others found group work to be useful in teaching communicative skills and

build better debate characteristics group work improved learning with certain social and academic groups only Taqi and Al-Nouh (2014). A discussion can bring out your students' interests and motivate them; it's a chance for them to talk about the things they really care about and this can be a good fun for students. In addition, Discussion activities encourage critical thinking, and are therefore excellent preparation for speaking tests, such as IELTS or TOEFL, which partly examine the ability to express and justify opinions in English (Technologic, 2015). Group methods moreover, support the link between the communicative approach to foreign language instruction and cooperative learning in small groups (Bejarano, 1987). A group discussion is proved to be able to break the interaction congestion during the learning process and stimulate communication skills which have come to be regarded as a requirement for performing well on the job (Vishwanathan, 2014). Furthermore, it stated that the globalised nature of work culture implies that soft skills in general and negotiation skills in particular are insisted on by employers and communication skills are increasingly seen as a passport to fulfilling jobs in Multinational companies.

Considering the existence of unique bicultural class which results in some challenges during the EFL instructional process, the EFL learners need to actively participate as the process of internalizing the language, so that it becomes more meaningful. In addition, based on the considerations that culture as a socially transmitted set of common beliefs which include symbolic, mental, behavioral, and material aspects patterned to provide a model for behavior and create a common framework for human society, (Bodley, 1994), to conduct classroom discussions can foster an atmosphere that encourages EFL learners to think about their own culture and make connections across cultures while studying English. Taking into account on the positive impact of implementing Group Discussion which can be done either in or out of classroom among the students of the same or different cultural background useful to trigger them having autonomous learning- this article is intended to describe

the effectiveness of *Inter and Intra culture-based Group Discussion* implemented in a bicultural class to cultivate autonomous learning in the light of students' perception and instructor's observation. As a result, the challenges among the students of such a class can be tackled.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since this study is concerned with EFL students of a bicultural class encountering some cultural differences which further causes learning challenges between those coming from two different cultural backgrounds, cooperative learning by which they can improve motivation (Pan & Wu, 2013; Ning & Hornby, 2014), and promote high level of achievement (Tran, 2014), and widen their social interaction (Laguador, 2014) among themselves is considerably implemented. This means that it is necessary for them to have Group Discussion as part of cooperative learning (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998) which was proved to be beneficial to be implemented in EFL classroom (Taqi and Al-Nouh, 2014), working in groups, students get the chance to expand their thought processes and simultaneously maximize communication with their peers (Othman and Murad, 2015). In order to come to the fluidity of the EFL students coming from two different cultural backgrounds, the discussion should be in the format of an inter and intra-culture based group discussion.

As a result, they will not anymore depend much on their group, but this will promote themselves to be autonomous learners who are able to control and take responsibility of their own learning. This is important because autonomous learning leads to greater motivation to learn a language (Nordlund, 1997), and to improve language proficiency (Dam and Legenhausen, 2010a). As revealed by Elizondo and Garita (2013) that the higher the autonomy level, the more successful the linguistic achievement will be. When students participate actively in the language learning instruction, the process of internalizing the language becomes more meaningful since long-lasting linguistic goals are attained. The autonomous learning in this

study is identified by conducting outside inter and intra group discussion independently.

Bilingual EFL Class

Multicultural education as according to Banks and Banks (Eds.) (2009) has three things to consider. They are an idea or concept, an educational reform movement, and a process. Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students regardless their gender, social class, ethnic, racial, and cultural background have an equal chance to learn in schools. On the other hand, a study about the role of culture in the classroom and the employment of teaching practices that accommodate students from diverse cultural backgrounds conducted by Aragona and Sawyer (2018) reveals that teachers defined culture broadly with infrequent mention of specific identities and did not portray strong endorsement of recommended multicultural practices. Their definitions of culture and their school of employment were associated with teachers' beliefs about practices.

Meanwhile, the term "bicultural class" in this research is defined as an EFL class consisting of EFL learners from two different cultural backgrounds. They are Indonesia, mostly Javanese and Thailand, all Pattani. Historically, they were rooted from the same culture of origin i.e. Malay. Yet, the span of development of both countries which is influenced by various different local, regional, and global factors, both countries come to different cultural development. Take for example, the language of "Malay", is not the same, even it tends to be more different, daily life preference, such as the EFL learners of Pattani both male and female prefer doing physical exercises to any academic activities concerning with learning. Their learning motivation is also different. This can obviously be reflected in their class presence. Both communities then developed to be countries of their own characteristics of languages, customs, moral values, life spirit, and education.

In a bicultural class where the EFL learners belong to two different cultural backgrounds, the variety of the EFL learners' characteristic tends to more heterogeneous. Cultures affect an

individual's personality and one's personality building (Friedman, 2012). This is due to the fact that the individual reacts in a way which is reflective of the knowledge one acquires from one or more culture(s) which further affects his hormonal changes, interaction with violence and family values. Accordingly, if ideals in one culture are not connected to another culture, which may cause generalizations about personality, problems may arise. Since personality can be shaped by both cultures, generalizations should not be made based on only one single culture. For example, as they commonly showed that either male or female EFL Thai students in Indonesia seem have more spirit to profoundly do physical exercises than to go to their English classes, while the Indonesia EFL students can concentrate more on their studies than doing physical exercise.

Another example of this difference would be their language and learning participation. Thai students joining English Education Program are not good at either English or Indonesian language or Malay language. Language as part of a culture contributes a lot to the in-classroom challenges such as passive participation, low motivation, academic gap, and classroom learning atmosphere. Therefore, the main task of a teacher is to provide them with an equal opportunity for students of two cultural backgrounds to learn English in the Indonesian context. In order that the two different cultures to be able to acculturate each other, then cooperative learning by which students cooperatively learn is well applicable. As a result, classroom barriers can be gradually reduced. Research reveals that group work in classroom activities can be benefited for motivating learning and increasing the idea of pleasure through learning (Taqi & Al-Nouh, 2014).

Culture based Group Discussion

Group Discussions (GD) based on the above-mentioned description can foster an atmosphere that encourages EFL students to think about their own culture including the beliefs, values, customs, products, and the communication styles of a given culture or society

(Cohen et al. 2003) and make connections across cultures while studying English. Discussion can also raise participants' involvement in the instruction (Garcia and Klein, 2015). So, there will be no culture controlling over another. To create "an atmosphere of interculturality" in the EFL classrooms, lecturers can encourage their EFL students to construct their own notions of culture instead of simply feeding them preformed information about the topics. Bodley, an anthropologist, (1994) sees culture as a socially transmitted set of common beliefs that include symbolic, mental, behavioral, and material aspects patterned to provide a model for behavior and create a common framework for human society. Thus, an EFL bicultural class which can be seen as a newly small society with some learning obstacles is an appropriate place to socially transmit the students' mental and behavioral aspects of learning. This can be conducted through involving all students in a cooperative learning, one of which is Group Discussion. It is a systematic and purposeful interactive oral process to exchange ideas, thoughts and feelings among the members of the groups.

In doing this group discussion, students of either the different (inter culture) or similar (intra culture) cultural groups should be equally formatted in order that they can more efficiently adjust each other. Intercultural phenomena as stated by Cohen et al. (2003) include culture shock, cultural adaptation, cultural adjustment, and the fact that people from other cultures may interpret similar situations differently. Moreover, to be involved in a group of the same cultural background is relatively easy, since they do need to make some cultural adjustment. Accordingly, the in advantageous classroom atmosphere resulted from cultural constraint can be culturally tackled through involving the two different cultures cooperatively. Thus culture based group discussion will not only help the learners to build their learning motivation but also to adjust the differences among themselves so that they become more adaptive. This further brings about their better academic performance.

When the EFL students staying in a bicultural has changed their thought and behaviors to be more adaptive within the difference without too much dependent on their own groups, they get the joy of learning and improve to be independent learners. Their willingness to take responsibility for their own learning will naturally grow. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) suggest that there are some aspects of learner autonomy which have been recognized and broadly accepted by the language teaching profession'. Autonomy is a construct of capacity involving a willingness on the part of the learner to take responsibility for their own learning. However, the capacity and willingness of learners to take such responsibility is not necessarily innate. Although the complete autonomy is an idealistic goal, there are unstable and variable degrees of autonomy. On the other hand, autonomy is not simply a matter of placing learners in situations where they have to be independent, but to develop autonomy requires conscious awareness of the learning process. Therefore, to promote autonomy is actually not only simply a matter of teaching strategies, but it can also take place both inside and outside the classroom since it has a social as well as an individual dimension. Moreover, the promotion of autonomy which is interpreted differently by different cultures has a political as well as psychological.

In conclusion, those aspects are important to be taken into account in the discussion of autonomous learning. Autonomy in learning is not only a matter of being independent, but it involves complex aspects as well which are derived from individual or social, political or psychological dimension. This is also seen as changeable degree and can be differently interpreted. Therefore, establishing autonomous learning should be portrayed from various aspects including cultures of the learners.

METHOD

This research was done qualitatively through distributing a questionnaire, namely "Inventory for EFL Students' Response on

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Inter and Intra Based Group Discussion to Build Learning Autonomy in a Bicultural Class” to the EFL students joining Reading Comprehension Subject Class. They consist of 27 students, 10 students were from Pattani, Thailand and the rest were from Indonesia who are mostly Javanese and few of them are non-Javanese origin. They stayed in the first year of the study program. This describes heterogeneity among those students, because they were at same adaptation to a new classroom atmosphere after their graduation from Senior High School. The Questionnaire Sheets were distributed after the implementation of Inter and Intra Culture Based Group Discussion at the end of the semester. Inter-culture basis in this study is defined as formatting group discussion of about 6 students from different cultural backgrounds- Indonesian and Pattani. Meanwhile intra culture basis is defined as creating group discussion of about 6 students from the same cultural backgrounds i.e. among Indonesians or Pattani students themselves. Subsequently, the data collected from the questionnaire which is in the form of information reflected in the students’ statements was then validated by interviewing the respondents. In order to conduct an interview, it was developed an interview guide.

The Questionnaire developed by using 5 Likert Scale consists of 4 elements, namely learning readiness, learning habits, learning motivation, and Group Discussion and Learning Autonomy. This Questionnaire is used to gain data concerning with the respondents’ response on the use of Inter and Intra Group Discussion (IIGD) on their readiness to learn English, their learning habits and motivation which affect the implementation of IIGD. Each section was then developed into several items. The instrument was developed based on reviewing literature on Group Discussion and Its Effect, inter and intra culture. The data collected from questionnaire was subsequently validated by interviewing the respondents. All the collected data from those two instruments were qualitative analyzed to draw a conclusion on the EFL response towards the use of Inter and Intra Culture Based Discussion to nurture the EFL students’ learning autonomy.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research show some elements concerning with the implementation of Inter and Intra culture based group discussion in a bicultural class to promote the EFL students learning autonomy. They are EFL students' learning readiness, their learning habits, learning motivation, and group discussion and learning autonomy.

Learning Readiness

The result of questionnaire (see Table 1) indicates that most (58.82 %) of EFL Indonesian students did not much encounter problem on their learning readiness. However, most (60%) of the EFL Pattani students state that they faced obstacle on their learning readiness (see Table 1). The case can be commonly happened for the Indonesian because they did not experience any culture shock. Meanwhile, the interview to the Pattani students indicates that when they join in a bicultural class, they experienced some cultural differences mainly on language use. The language used in the EFL instruction was English as means of instruction which they thought Indonesian people were better prepared than the Pattani.. Yet, they were aware that their English competence was not as good as the Indonesians'.

During the classroom instructional process, the lecturers used Indonesian language to clarify their explanation delivered in English. What usually happened during the instructional process was that the Pattani students often as the Indonesian students for clarifying the lecturers' English explanation and or questions. This broke their concentration. This is good solution for the Indonesian students who speak that language, but not the Pattani students who cannot speak in Indonesian language. Although both Indonesia and Pattani are grouped in Malay culture, they do not share the same linguistics characteristics. They were still struggling to use Indonesian language in their daily communication. Moreover, the EFL Indonesian students who are mostly Javanese (one of the main tribes in Indonesia) often

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used their local languages in daily communication. This brought the Pattani students about facing culture shock- adapting themselves with different language used, classroom social interaction, and English instruction. Consequently, unlike the EFL Indonesian students, the EFL Pattani students were lack of learning readiness. This fact leads to the obstacle of EFL classroom instruction which is further able to inhibit the EFL learning objectives.

Table 1 Learning Readiness of Indo and Thai Students

| Statement | 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | | 5 | |
|---|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|-----|----|
| <i>Learning Readiness</i> | % | | % | | % | | % | | % | |
| | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T |
| I encounter problems on learning readiness during the instructional process? | 0 | 0 | 58.8 | 20 | 0 | 10 | 35.3 | 60 | 5.9 | 10 |
| I do not encounter any problems on learning readiness during the instructional process? | 5.9 | 10 | 52.9 | 60 | 5.9 | 10 | 35.3 | 20 | 0 | 0 |
| I am ready to learn English with students having different cultural background | 11.8 | 0 | 41.2 | 20 | 0 | 30 | 41.2 | 40 | 5.9 | 10 |
| I am not ready to learn English with students having different cultural background | 0 | 0 | 35.3 | 50 | 11.8 | 20 | 52.9 | 30 | 0 | 0 |

Notes: I= Indonesian; T=Thai

Learning Habits

Another element that is importantly taken into account as the basis to implement inter and intra culture based group discussion is the students' habit of learning. Table 2 indicates that 58.82 % EFL Indonesian student were not significantly affected with the difference

Table 2 Learning Habits of Indo and Thai Students

| Statement | 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | | 5 | |
|--|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|
| | % | | % | | % | | % | | % | |
| | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T |
| I can learn English although I speak in a different language with my classmates | 5.9 | 10 | 17.7 | 70 | 0 | 0 | 58.8 | 20 | 17.7 | 0 |
| I cannot learn English because I speak in a different language with classmates | 11.8 | 0 | 64.7 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 23.5 | 70 | 0 | 20 |
| I can learn English because I speak in the same language with classmates | 0 | 0 | 76.5 | 70 | 0 | 0 | 23.5 | 30 | 0 | 0 |
| I cannot learn English although I speak in the same language with my classmates | 5.9 | 10 | 70.6 | 30 | 17.7 | 20 | 5.9 | 40 | 0 | 0 |
| I ask my classmates from different cultural background when I get learning difficulties | 11.8 | 0 | 88.2 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 0 | 30 |
| I do not ask my classmates from different cultural background when I get learning difficulties | 0 | 20 | 0 | 60 | 0 | 0 | 88.2 | 20 | 17.7 | 0 |
| I never ask my classmates from different cultural background when I get learning difficulties | 0 | 40 | 0 | 30 | 0 | 10 | 58.8 | 20 | 41.2 | 0 |
| I ask my classmates from the same cultural background when I get learning difficulties | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 70.6 | 50 | 29.4 | 50 |
| I never ask my classmates from the same cultural background when I get learning difficulties | 5.9 | 30 | 94.1 | 70 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Notes: I= Indonesian; T=Thai

language used from their Pattani classmates, and even 70.59% disagreed with the statement stating that they cannot learn English although they have the same language with their classmates. This shows that they have set their learning habits and the interview indicates that during the classroom learning process they interacted much with the lecturer. During this classroom instructional process, it seemed that there was a big gap in between these two groups of EFL students. Again table 3 shows that 88.24% Indonesian students never asked their classmates from different cultural background, but most of them (70.59%) asked their classmates of the same cultural background. In contrast, table 2 shows that 40 % Pattani students agreed with the statement stating they ask their classmates of different cultural background when they get learning difficulties. This actually indicates that they struggle to adapt with the learning style of the Indonesian, reduce their culture shock, and improve their English.

However, 94.12% of the Pattani seemed enjoyed asking and discussing their learning problems with their classmates of the same cultural background. This finding indicates two main important cases, namely cultural based groups of students in a bicultural class and Competence based groups of students. This leads to non-conducive classroom instructional activities that possibly obstruct the achievement of learning instruction. The above revealed cases arouse for the cultural and competence differences trigger learning obstacles. Hence, it is necessary to make the classroom learning atmosphere be conducive by reducing the gap between two different groups of EFL students and creating fun learning atmosphere for all students in a bicultural class in order to achieve their EFL learning objective. This is in line with Taqi and Al-Nouh (2014) who found that group work increases the idea of pleasure through learning.

Learning Motivation

After conducting Group Discussion formatted by considering students' cultural background and language competency, the gradually melted each other. Like Most of the Indonesian students

(58.82%) (see Table 3), the EFL Pattani students (70% as seen in table 3) also state that they are motivated to learn English although they stay in an EFL class consisting of two different groups of students from two different cultural backgrounds. The discussion was done inside the classroom and it was suggested to conduct a regular outside Group discussion. In doing outside classroom discussion they made an agreement and commitment by appointing one of their classmates, considered the best of all, to lead the outside class group discussion done by mixing students from both Indonesia and Pattani students. It was independently done for the sake of enriching their classroom learning activities and doing assignment of any subjects. In addition, the Pattani students also conducted Group Discussion among themselves discussing about their academic and non-academic problems faced among them. In short, as revealed by Pan & Wu (2013) and Ning & Hornby (2014), that group discussion can improve students' learning motivation.

Table 3 Learning Motivation of Indo and Thai Students

| Statement | 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | | 5 | |
|---|---|---|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|
| | % | | % | | % | | % | | % | |
| <i>Learning motivation</i> | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T |
| I am motivated to learn English when using Group Discussion although I speak in a different language with my classmates | 0 | 0 | 23.5 | 20 | 5.9 | 0 | 58.8 | 70 | 11.8 | 10 |
| I am not motivated to learn English when using Group Discussion because I speak in a different language with my classmates. | 0 | 0 | 70.6 | 70 | 17.7 | 0 | 11.8 | 30 | 0 | 0 |
| I am motivated to learn English | 0 | 0 | 5.9 | 20 | 0 | 10 | 88.2 | 60 | 5.9 | 10 |

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| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|
| when using Group Discussion although I have different cultural background with my classmates | | | | | | | | | | |
| I am not motivated to learn English when using Group Discussion because I have different cultural background with my classmates | 5.88 | 10 | 88.2 | 70 | 5.88 | 10 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| I enjoy learning English with my classmates of different cultural background when using Group Discussion | 0 | 0 | 41.1 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 58.8 | 60 | 5.88 | 10 |
| I do not enjoy learning English with my classmates of different cultural background when using Group Discussion | 0 | 0 | 52.9 | 70 | 0 | 0 | 47.1 | 30 | 0 | 0 |
| I can actively participate to learn English in this bicultural class when using Group Discussion | 0 | 0 | 35.3 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 64.7 | 70 | 0 | 10 |
| I cannot actively participate to learn English in this bicultural class when using Group Discussion | 11.8 | 0 | 52.9 | 70 | 5.88 | 10 | 29.4 | 20 | 0 | 0 |

Notes: I= Indonesian; T=Thai

The implementation of such a Group Discussion in the classroom has essentially help them to motivate learning English in

the classroom. Furthermore, it can also be seen that most of the Indonesian students (64.71%, see table 3) actively participate in the classroom instructional process, as the Pattani students (70%, see table 3) do. The academic and cultural gap between the Indonesian and Pattani students in the classroom has gradually and naturally reduced, because they get an equal chance to communicate. This finding supports a study by Othman and Murad (2015) proving that working in groups, students get the chance to expand their thought processes and simultaneously maximize communication with their peers. They started to forget the differences among them. This can be implicitly reflected in these quoted interviews:

Yes, because I can discuss with both different and similar cultural background. Although I feel more comfortable to be close with my friends from the same cultural background, more importantly I can learn a lot from my classmate of different cultural background.
(Hasanee)

Yes, because I can ask my friend who know better than me and feel free to ask them in my own way that I cannot do to my lecturer. (Smilee)

The finding of the present research indicates that Inter and Intra Culture based Group Discussion gives positive effect on the students' learning motivation which is identified by the joy of actively involved in the classroom learning activities.

Group Discussion and Learning Autonomy

The most significant point that can be revealed from the finding of the present study is that most of the Indonesian students (76.47%) and the Pattani (60%) really enjoy having Group Discussion involving cultural and academic elements in its formation, so that they feel equally treated by the lecturer (see table 4). As a result, they feel that the differences and the gap between them are not anymore important to be considered as the big problem which block their dreams of being good in English so that they can be successfully catch their to be English teachers when they are back to their own country, Thailand. This finding is in line with a study by Othman and Murad

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(2015) revealing that working in groups, students get the chance to expand their thought processes and simultaneously maximize communication with their peers. Table 4 also explicitly reveals that Inter and Intra culture based Group Discussion done either inside or outside the classroom is helpful to promote their independent learning. This can be implicitly reflected in the quoted interview below.

We have regular meeting with Indonesia students and ourselves to discuss various learning problems and life problems. This kind of discussion train us to be more independent, stronger to live in a far distance from our homeland, to study more independently (Hamdee)

Another proof shows that the implementation of such a discussion done regularly in outside the classroom promotes the students' learning motivation and spirit to learn English. With this kind of Group Discussion they have built conscious awareness of learning process, as stated by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012). The following quoted interview clearly reflects this fact.

Table 3 Group Discussion and Learning Autonomy of Indo and Thai Students

| Statement | 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | | 5 | |
|--|-----|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|
| | % | | % | | % | | % | | % | |
| | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T | I | T |
| I enjoy working in a group discussion of students from only the same cultural backgrounds done both in and outside classroom | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 5.88 | 10 | 88.2 | 60 | 5.88 | 20 |
| I do not enjoy working in a group discussion of students from the same cultural backgrounds (intra | 5.9 | 10 | 76.5 | 70 | 0 | 0 | 23.5 | 20 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|-----|----|
| culture) done both in and outside classroom | | | | | | | | | | |
| I enjoy working in a group of students from different cultural backgrounds (inter culture) done both in and outside classroom | 0 | 0 | 88.2 | 20 | 11.8 | 0 | 0 | 60 | 0 | 20 |
| I do not enjoy working in a group discussion of students different cultural backgrounds done both in and outside classroom | 0 | 0 | 17.7 | 60 | 5.9 | 10 | 76.5 | 30 | 0 | 0 |
| I enjoy working in a group discussion of students from the mixture of different cultural backgrounds done both in and outside classroom | 0 | 10 | 35.3 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 58.8 | 60 | 5.9 | 20 |
| I do not enjoy working in a group discussion of students from the mixture of different cultural backgrounds done both in and outside classroom | 5.9 | 10 | 52.9 | 60 | 0 | 0 | 41.2 | 30 | 0 | 0 |
| Inter Culture based Group Discussion done both in and outside classrooms helps me to build my learning autonomy | 0 | 0 | 17.7 | 20 | 0 | 10 | 76.5 | 60 | 5.9 | 10 |
| Intra Culture based Group Discussion done both in and outside classroom | 0 | 0 | 70.6 | 70 | 5.9 | 10 | 23.5 | 20 | 0 | 0 |

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| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----|---|------|----|------|----|------|----|-----|----|--|
| does not help me to build my learning autonomy | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Inter Culture based Group Discussion done both in and outside classrooms motivates me to be an independent EFL learners | 0 | 0 | 23.5 | 10 | 11.8 | 20 | 64.7 | 70 | 0 | 0 | |
| Intra Culture based Group Discussion done both in and outside classrooms does not motivate me to be an independent EFL learners | 5.9 | 0 | 52.9 | 20 | 5.9 | 10 | 29.4 | 60 | 5.9 | 10 | |

Notes: I= Indonesian; T=Thai

The group discussions are very exciting... be active both in and out of the classroom. Alhamdulillah, little by little they can do it. This program actually responded good not only from my class but also another class. In addition to appreciate this program, my Indo friends ask to extend... I think this program is too beneficial to rise up the motivation on studying. ... I see the program really help them. (Anas)

The above interviewee clearly stated that this outside Culture based Group Discussion is not only useful for one subject (Literal Reading Comprehension), but this also advantageous for other subjects. Even students of other bilingual classes implement this learning strategy in outside the classroom take advantages. This can be seen from their willingness to extend the program (regular outside classroom group discussion) which they think they become more motivated to study, because their learning challenges found in the classroom can be relatively easily solved. In addition, a small Culture based Group Discussion done in this study is also beneficial to improve the students social interaction in a bicultural as also revealed by Laguador (2014), so that it can reduce their culture shock. This finding is parallel to Slavin (1985) stating that in cooperative learning develops high-order thinking skills, enhances motivation and

improve interpersonal relations as well as enhancing motivation and peer relations.

To sum up, in a bicultural class, EFL students from two different cultural backgrounds in a non English speaking country commonly encounter learning problems mainly due to the fact that they experience culture shock. This triggers to inhibit the EFL learning objective. Therefore, finding out an innovative instructional strategy involving the students' cultural (inter and intra culture) and academic background in conducting it will be beneficial not only to solve their learning problems but also to promote their learning autonomy. This research proves that culture group discussion done either inside the classroom under the guidance of the EFL teacher or outside the classroom independently is meaningful to motivate the students to learn English, to create the joy of learning English, and more importantly reduce the students' cultural and educational gap, However, outside classroom group discussion involving students of both cultural backgrounds-Indonesian and Thai- regularly and independently can promote the students learning autonomy.

CONCLUSION

It can be sum up that the present research reveals that Group Discussion formatted by considering the EFL students' cultural issues such as language differences and educational background namely students' EFL competencies is beneficial to promote motivation of the EFL students in a bicultural EFL class. A Group Discussion consisting of all students from the same cultural background (intra-culture based, i.e among only Thai EFL students and only the Indonesian EFL students) and those from different cultural (Inter-culture based, i.e. between Thai and Indonesian EFL students) has gradually led to the establishment of their EFL learning autonomy as well. This Inter and Intra Culture based Group Discussion is optimally meaningful to help the students to get the joy of learning if it is done both inside and outside the classroom. The finding of this research is parallel with a study by Laguardor (2014) which reveals that Culture Group-Based

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Discussion reduces culture shock, so that the learners find learning as joyful activity. *Inside classroom Inter and Intra Group Discussion* was done under the guidance of the EFL lecturer as the model on how to conduct such a discussion in the classroom context. Meanwhile, the *outside classroom Inter and Intra Group Discussion* was independently done on their own schedule once a week.

The quantity of time to meet and mix between them have melted their cultural differences into the joy of learning, so that communication among the students themselves and that between the students and the lecturer has no much barriers anymore. Most of them, mainly those from Thai who faced the bigger learning problems than those from Indonesia, claim that Group Discussion which consists of the mixture of difference culture and that of EFL competence is much helpful to promote their learning motivation and autonomy. This is due to the fact that with this method, they claim that they can learn either independently or in group. This finding supports Chikwa et.al. (2018) who prove that to be independent in the language learning process is helpful to be autonomous learners. Moreover, social interaction built among the members in group discussion is important for successful learning because their involvement indicates that they gain motivation as in line with Barak et.al. (2016). Learning motivation is further essential to improve their learning readiness on EFL instruction, reduce their cultural barriers, and improve their learning autonomy so that their EFL competence is also improved.

On the basis of this research result, it is recommended for the EFL lecturers teaching in a bicultural class to use this Inter and Intra Culture based Group Discussion to reduce their learning barriers due to cultural differences. This fact will further help the EFL learners to promote their own learning autonomy and independence. Consequently, this brings about improving the students' learning achievement. Moreover, the result of the present research indicates the needs of making more qualified and better requirements of selecting foreign students who mainly want to study EFL in

Indonesian context, in order not to bring about more problems in EFL instruction in Indonesian context. Most importantly, this research gives a factual description on how to support the government scholarship program for especially Pattani, Thai students to take further EFL study in Indonesian context, by implementing appropriate EFL instructional strategies so that the goal of the Governmental Program runs well.

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