

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Research

In the era of globalization, communication has become a crucial factor for success in international settings. With increasing interconnectedness, effective communication enables businesses and individuals to navigate cultural differences, manage cross-border interactions, and create strong relationships. Effective communication is reflected in the communication process that occurs between the speaker and the listener.

According to Hardianti (2016) states that communication becomes smooth, if speaker find some effective ways to communicate their thoughts. Along with the advancement of education and the times, people increasingly have the potential to communicate with someone from a different country. In addition, the ability to communicate, especially responding in conversation, will determine the course of social relationships between them.

On the other hand, communication will run smoothly if verbal and non-verbal communication work synergistically to create a deeper understanding between individuals. The use of appropriate gestures can help convey messages more clearly, especially when there is a language barrier that hinders verbal understanding. Research conducted by McNeill (2005) shows that gestures can reinforce the meaning of verbal communication and provide additional context that clarifies the message. In addition, Novack et al. (2018) found that individuals who use gestures when speaking are more effective in reducing misunderstandings, because gestures provide a direct visualization of the message to be conveyed. In

cross-cultural interactions, gestures can also serve as a tool to bridge language differences, helping speakers and listeners build understanding despite differences in cultural backgrounds or limitations in language ability.

According to Kramsch (2023), communication particularly in English as a global language, serves as an indispensable bridge for intercultural exchanges, despite challenges like inequality and the spread of misinformation through digital platforms. As a part of intercultural exchanges, cross-cultural is considered as communication that takes place between people of different cultures or people who represent their culture. Furthermore, cross-cultural communication is distinguished from intracultural communication, which occurs between people sharing a common culture, and intercultural communication, which refers to exchanges in an interpersonal setting between individuals from different cultures. Safitri et al., (2021) said that it is essential for individuals especially students to enhance their awareness of other cultures while simultaneously reflecting on their own cultural identity. The background knowledge and language skills will play a role in making the other person feel comfortable in communicating. Direct communication has certain challenges, especially in an intercultural context. Various barriers such as cultural differences, language barriers, false assumptions, and technological limitations can hinder the effectiveness of this process.

Cross-cultural communication requires not only linguistic proficiency but also cultural competence, which involves understanding and respecting the values, norms, and communication styles of others. As Ting-Toomey (2017) points out, effective cross-cultural communication hinges on the ability to navigate differences in verbal and non-verbal cues, as well as the underlying cultural assumptions that

shape them. Misinterpretations often arise when individuals from different cultural backgrounds apply their own cultural frameworks to interpret messages, which can lead to misunderstandings or even conflicts. In the context of direct communication, this becomes even more pronounced, as cultural norms regarding directness, politeness, and emotional expression vary significantly across cultures. Therefore, fostering mutual understanding and adaptability is essential to overcoming these challenges and achieving successful intercultural exchanges. English in nations where the language is not widely spoken. English serves as a language of teaching in a number of domains, including business, technology, and education, in addition to being a tool for worldwide communication (Luthfi, 2024). As said by Abrar et al., (2024), for international students, coming and moving to another country that has different languages, cultures, and environments, can be quite challenging. English in nations where the language is not widely spoken. English serves as a language of teaching in a number of domains, including business, technology, and education, in addition to being a tool for worldwide communication.

Universitas Jambi with the vision of realizing "A World Class Entrepreneurship University" has accepted some foreign students to explore knowledge at Universitas Jambi. Since 2021, Universitas Jambi has accepted students from Myanmar, Malaysia, Gambia, and Thailand. Meanwhile, in 2023, Universitas Jambi had increasingly flap its wings in the international world by accepting students from Pakistan, Egypt, Africa and several other countries. In the English language education department, in 2021 there are 4 international students from Myanmar, Thailand, and Malaysia. The four students have different styles and speeds of speaking.

Based on experience and the results of an initial informal survey conducted by researcher with Indonesian students from international class batch 2021, the researcher asked two Indonesian students with the question “Does communication with international peers go smoothly?”. Both of them admitted that sometimes they had difficulty grasping the meaning of sentences expressed by some international peers. In direct communication they stated that in some cases, they repeat the questions or statement to confirm the meaning. This is different from when they have written conversations such as chat, they can see the sentences spoken so as to minimize the possibility of misunderstanding. In addition, in written conversations, Indonesian students can also translate words they do not know through dictionaries or translation machines. Student ability can be one of the factors that slow down understanding in communication with international peers. This challenge in oral communication makes researcher want to explore cases that have been experienced and occurred between Indonesian students and international peers. The researcher also tried to explore the relationship between students' understanding and the existence of oral communication strategies including the use of gestures of international peers during communication. Based on the above considerations, the researcher is interested in raising the title of the study, “Challenges in Cross-cultural Communication: Indonesian EFL Students Experiences with International Peers”.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are the challenges faced by Indonesian EFL students when engaging cross-cultural communication with international peers?
2. How do Indonesian EFL students overcome the challenges in cross-cultural communication?

1.3 Purpose of The Research

This study aims to describe the challenges of EFL students in English education at Universitas Jambi in oral communication with international peers, figures roles of oral communication strategies facilitating understanding cross-cultural communication between Indonesian EFL students and international peers, and the find out their strategies to overcome the challenges in cross-cultural communication.

1.4 Limitation of The Research

This study limits the challenges of oral communication in informal settings in terms of direct daily conversation rather than formal or academic settings. Direct communication in this study refers to communication that occurs face-to-face. The perspectives studied in the research are Indonesian students who are members in international class and have conducted oral communication with international peers.

1.5 Significance of the Research

The results of this study are expected to be useful and have benefits for writer, students, and other researchers. The results of the research are expected to contribute to the development of science and add insight into thought for researchers, as a steppingstone for other researchers, especially in the field of international students' phenomena. On the other hand, this study is expected to add information for students who have the same difficulties or problems as the participants and can help Indonesian and international EFL students who find it difficult to understand direct communication. This research is also expected as a

way to find the strategies for lecturers especially in the field of speaking class which has the same context problem in their classes.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

There are several terms the researcher uses in this study. The following are the definition of key terms to clarify and explain the terms of the title and to avoid ambiguity in this study.

- **Indonesian EFL Students**

Indonesian EFL students is a term used to refer to Indonesian students from various regions studying at Universitas Jambi.

- **International Peers**

International peers are international students who move to another country to continue all or part of their higher education. They are encouraged to collaborate with Indonesian EFL student. In this case, they are studying at Universitas Jambi who come from Myanmar, Malaysia, and Thailand.

- **Challenges**

Challenges is a term used for the difficulties experienced by students. In this study, this term refers to the challenge of direct communication by Indonesian EFL students.

- **Cross-cultural Communication**

Cross-cultural communication means that communication occurs between two or more people and involves different cultures because they come from different places.

- **Direct Communication**

Direct communication is a term that refers to oral communication that is done face-to-face and occurs at the same time.

- **Oral Communication**

Speaking aloud or utilizing nonverbal clues, such as tone of voice, to convey ideas is known as oral communication.