

English Teachers' Intercultural Awareness towards Culturally Diverse Students on Language Teaching

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the level of English teachers' intercultural awareness towards culturally diverse students in Gorontalo Province, Indonesia. A total of 40 English teachers from junior and senior high schools participated in this study, specifically those teaching in schools with multicultural student populations. Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed over a two-week period. The classification framework of intercultural awareness proposed by Baker (2011) was employed to guide the quantitative analysis, while the construct of intercultural knowledge and comprehension, derived from Deardorff's (2006) model of intercultural competence, was used to measure awareness. The results showed that 75% of the respondents were categorized at the Intercultural level, 25% were at the Advanced level, and no teachers were classified at the Basic level. Teachers' intercultural awareness was assessed across three dimensions: Cultural Self-Awareness (CSA), Cultural-Specific Information (CSI), and Sociolinguistic Awareness (SLA). The findings revealed that teachers demonstrate stronger awareness in sociolinguistic and general cultural aspects, but relatively less understanding of students' specific cultural backgrounds. Demographic variables such as age, gender, educational background, teaching experience, place of origin, school location, school type, and multicultural

classroom size were analyzed. The findings indicated that teaching experience and classroom size demonstrated the most substantial influence on overall CSA, CSI, and SLA scores. Conversely, Gender had a less pronounced effect on these components.

Keywords: Intercultural Awareness, Intercultural Competence, Cultural Diversity, Multicultural Classrooms, English Language Teaching

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is recognized as a country with a large population consisting of numerous ethnic groups. It is noted that there are over 600 distinct ethnic groups spread within 270 million people ^[17]. Javanese has been rated as the largest ethnic group over the other majority such as the Sundanese, Batak (North Sumatra), Balinese, and many others. This diversity has been shaped by several key factors such as migration, globalization, economic opportunities, education, and many others. These factors cause individuals to inevitably experience the cultural exchanges which emerge the multiculturalism within the population. Multiculturalism completely refers to the diverse cultural beliefs and practices among groups of people that shape how they respect, tolerate, and understand themselves and the world, and how they deal with their diverse life ^[1]. Multiculturalism is seen as a phenomenon that exists only when diverse

cultures are compatibly shared within a society^[2]. Multicultural conditions are often found in educational settings. It is noted that multicultural societies are commonly found in educational environments, where culturally diverse students are involved in learning practice which embarks the supports and respects from institution towards the diversity^[3]. Schools serve as potential 'micro-publics' for assessing cross-cultural understanding, though cultural polarization remains sensitive^[4]. These circumstances create intercultural dynamics that both teachers and students may experience during the learning process. The role of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning has been investigated, in which the findings indicated that cultivating intercultural awareness has strong impact on a major goal of foreign learning course as well as incorporating in teaching methodology^[5]. Intercultural awareness is the most basic competence that is unconsciously very crucial for teachers in this globalization era. Due to the application of Kurikulum Merdeka that challenges teachers to transfer knowledge and materials based on students' needs; it can be inferred that students with multicultural backgrounds definitely have different learning needs. Therefore, students from multicultural backgrounds inevitably require differentiated instruction. This raises an important question: Are teachers truly aware of their students' cultural diversity, or do they overlook it?

In this context, English teachers' intercultural awareness towards students' cultural diversity in junior and senior schools all over Gorontalo was promptly become the object of this study. The study aimed to examine the level of teachers' intercultural awareness in teaching the culturally diverse students in multicultural classroom context. The topic regarded to intercultural awareness and cultural diversity in the context of multicultural education has been frequently discussed by several previous studies. Studies investigated EFL teachers' perceptions in

multicultural classrooms^[6] and teachers' intercultural phenomena concerning their perceptions and practices of integrating intercultural communicative competence^[7], reveal a gap between positive attitudes toward cultural integration and the actual implementation of ICC, with many teachers prioritizing linguistic elements over intercultural dimensions in practice.

It is argued that despite a clear understanding of the need to integrate ICC components in English language education, many teachers still struggle to apply these concepts in classroom settings^[16], indicating a potential gap between theoretical awareness and practical implementation. In response to this gap, this study specifically investigated the level of intercultural awareness among English teachers in Gorontalo, Indonesia. A key distinction of this research lies in its methodological approach; it precisely examines teachers' intercultural awareness through Deardorff's model^[8], focusing on intercultural knowledge and comprehension competence. Furthermore, it employs Baker's framework^[9] to provide a structured classification of teachers' intercultural awareness levels (Basic, Advanced, and Intercultural). This specific focus on intercultural knowledge and comprehension, combined with Baker's classification, differentiates this study from previous work and aims to inform the development of tools designed to enhance cultural awareness and foster greater respect for diversity among both teachers and students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intercultural Awareness

Intercultural Awareness (IA) is defined as the efforts of becoming more knowledgeable of one's own culture as well as other cultures which lead to the development of cultural understanding between group of people or societies^[10]. There are two key elements; self-awareness and cultural awareness of others^[5]. Cultural awareness refers to recognizing how cultural influences impact language use and

communication. This awareness encompasses three essential qualities; self-awareness, which individual understand their own culturally-influenced behaviors; Cultural awareness of others that is the ability of recognizing the culturally-influenced behaviors of individuals from different cultures; and explanatory ability, where individual already have the capacity to articulate one's own cultural perspective. Intercultural awareness is expanded as the multifaceted concept which involves a deep understanding of cultural differences and their impact on communication. Baker outlines three levels of intercultural awareness^[9]:

a. Basic Cultural Awareness

At this level, someone is considered to have basic cultural awareness when they are aware of their own culture and can respect other cultures. In this case, Indonesian people acknowledge that Western tend to be individualistic and closed, different from the Indonesian citizens who are more open and friendly. Being on the level of basic cultural awareness means individuals have a fundamental understanding of the target language's culture, recognizing that other cultures may differ in terms of behaviors, beliefs, and values^[11]. However, this awareness is often limited to generalizations and stereotypes, lacking a deeper understanding of cultural nuances and complexities.

b. Advanced Cultural Awareness

At this second level, individuals possess a nuanced understanding of cultural details that are crucial for avoiding misunderstandings and conflicts. They recognize the inherent value and uniqueness of all cultures, eschewing any notion of cultural superiority. This capacity to discern both the positive and negative aspects of a culture, while maintaining respect for its integrity, is a hallmark of this level of intercultural awareness. For instances, the foreigners understand that uttering the words related to “sex” in Indonesia is

considered taboo even though it is common in their original country. Hence, they try to avoid the topic related to “sex” and not considering that Indonesia has bad culture due to the contrary viewpoint. This action presents the advanced cultural awareness of individuals in the way of understanding others' cultures. To foster deeper understanding and empathy between cultures, it has been proposed that cultural awareness should evolve into intercultural awareness^[11]. This shift emphasizes the importance of not only recognizing cultural differences but also actively engaging with and learning from diverse perspectives.

c. Intercultural Awareness

This is the highest level of intercultural awareness, where individuals recognize that cultural references and communicative practices in intercultural interactions may not always be directly tied to specific cultures. They have the ability to mediate and negotiate between different cultural frames of reference and communication modes as they emerge in specific intercultural contexts. Intercultural communicators at this level are aware of the liminal and emergent nature of cultural forms and practices, allowing them to adapt and respond effectively to diverse cultural situations. Intercultural awareness necessitates a twofold understanding^[11]. First, individuals must recognize their own cultural identity and how it shapes their worldview. Second, they must utilize this self-awareness as a foundation to explore and comprehend the distinct characteristics of other cultures. This dual perspective enables individuals to interpret the behaviours of others in intercultural interactions more effectively.

Intercultural Competence of Knowledge and Comprehension

Intercultural knowledge and comprehension refer to the cultural understanding of both one's own culture and others, which enables individuals to navigate cultural differences effectively. Three are three highlighted

critical aspects within this competence model^[8]; cultural self-awareness, cultural-specific information, and sociolinguistic awareness.

a) Cultural Self-Awareness (CSA)

It indicates the way individual recognize their own cultural background, values, beliefs, and behaviors shape interactions with others. This self-awareness helps individuals understand their cultural biases and assumptions, making them more mindful of how they perceive and engage with different cultural groups.

b) Cultural-Specific Information (CSI)

This activity refers to an individual's understanding of the customs, traditions, values, and communication styles of specific cultures that are different with their own. This knowledge is essential for effective intercultural communication as it allows individuals to interpret behaviors and social norms correctly within a given cultural context.

c) Sociolinguistic Awareness (SLA)

It is defined as the ability to understand how language, nonverbal cues, and cultural contexts influence communication. Since language is deeply embedded in cultural meaning, misinterpretations can arise when individuals are unaware of sociolinguistic differences. By developing these areas of knowledge and comprehension, individuals can engage more effectively in intercultural interactions and reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to systematically investigate and present an overview of English teachers' intercultural awareness. This approach was chosen to quantify and describe the participants' levels of awareness using numerical data derived from a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages,

means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the distribution of teachers across the three levels of intercultural awareness (Basic, Advanced, and Intercultural), as well as their performance across the three key components of intercultural competence: Cultural Self-Awareness (CSA), Cultural-Specific Information (CSI), and Sociolinguistic Awareness (SLA).

Additionally, a correlational analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between teachers' intercultural awareness and various demographic variables, including age, gender, educational background, teaching experience, place of origin, school location, and multicultural classroom size. By combining descriptive and correlational approaches, this methodology provides a clearer understanding of both the current status and influencing factors of intercultural awareness among English teachers.

Research Participants

A total of 40 English teachers in junior and senior high schools in Gorontalo province, particularly those teaching in the schools where multicultural students exist, become the participants in this study. The purposive sampling was employed to select the participants from educational institutions with multicultural student populations. The purposive sampling is, on the other hand, known as a call sample, in which the procedure of selecting the sample is based on relevance of the participants among the entire population^[12]. It calls a specific group of knowledgeable individuals rather than engaging with the whole population. These criterion-based selection of participants from contexts supporting multiculturalism was implemented to enhance the precision and trustworthiness of the resultant research findings.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through a questionnaire, which served as the primary instrument for measuring teachers' intercultural awareness

toward culturally diverse students. A questionnaire is a research tool consisting of structured questions aimed at gathering specific information^[13]. The construction of the questionnaire was guided by Deardorff's model of intercultural competence^[8], which consists of attitudes, knowledge and comprehension, and skills. However, this study focused specifically on the knowledge and comprehension dimension, which is directly aligned with the study's objective.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections:

1. Demographic information, including age, gender, educational background, teaching experience, place of origin, school level (junior or senior high), school location (urban or rural), and multicultural classroom size.
2. Items measuring intercultural awareness, aligned with Baker's framework (Basic, Advanced, Intercultural)^[9] and Deardorff's indicators (CSA, CSI, SLA)^[8]. Each item used a structured response scale with three levels, each corresponding to one of the intercultural awareness categories.

Data Analysis

This study employed a multifaceted quantitative approach, incorporating categorization, descriptive statistics, and correlational analysis. Initially, teachers were classified into levels of intercultural awareness; Basic, Advanced, and Intercultural based on their responses to the questionnaire, guided by Baker's framework^[9]. This classification utilized an ordinal scale, where participants selected from a structured set of three response options (A, B, and C), each corresponding to a specific level of intercultural awareness: Basic (1 point), Advanced (2 points), and Intercultural (3 points). Aggregate scores derived from these responses were

subsequently used to assign teachers to one of the three designated categories:

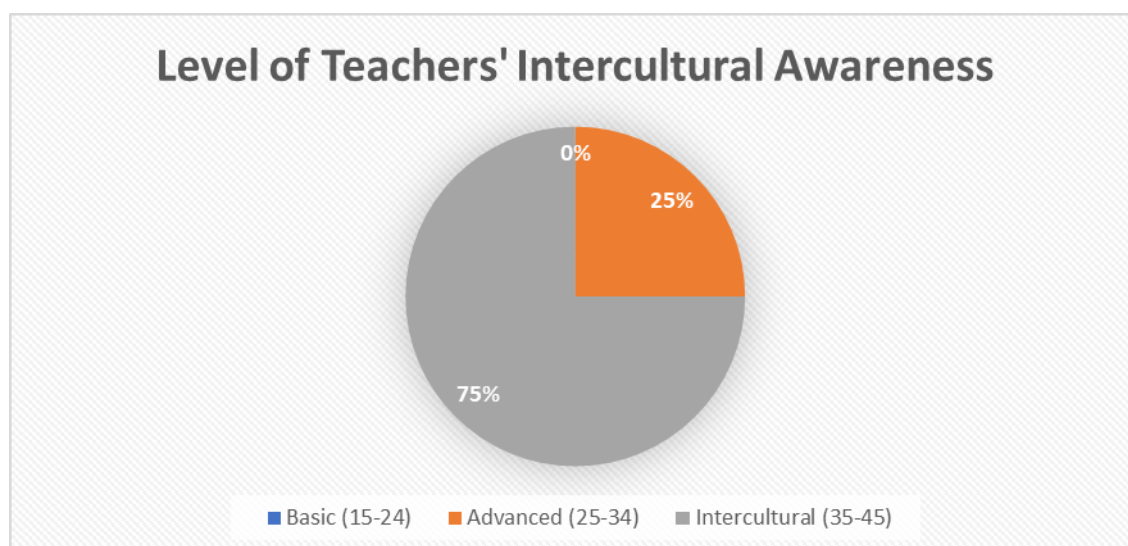
- Basic cultural awareness: 15-24 points
- Advanced cultural awareness: 25-34 points
- Intercultural awareness: 35-45 points

Participants' total scores determined their placement within the three awareness levels. In addition, the analysis involved descriptive statistics to characterize the sample's intercultural awareness. Specifically, means and standard deviations were calculated for the scores within each of the three intercultural awareness levels. This procedure served to illustrate both the central tendency and the degree of variability in intercultural awareness among the participants, providing a clearer understanding of the overall distribution of awareness levels. Ultimately, correlational analyses were conducted to explore potential relationships between teachers' intercultural awareness levels and various demographic factors. Variables such as age, gender, educational background, teaching experience, place of origin, school level (junior or senior high), school location (urban or rural), and multicultural classroom size were examined to identify any significant associations that might offer additional insights into factors influencing teachers' intercultural awareness."

RESULT

A. Overall Findings of Teachers' Intercultural Awareness Levels

A total of 40 English teachers reported their level of intercultural awareness through online questionnaire form. The analysis of the questionnaire responses revealed that:



The analysis of the questionnaire responses revealed that most English teachers demonstrated a strong level of intercultural awareness. The distribution of scores shows that 75% of the respondents (30 out of 40 teachers) fell into the Intercultural Level (35-45 points), indicating that these teachers possess a well-developed ability to recognize, understand, and engage with cultural diversity in their classrooms. Meanwhile, 25% of respondents (10 out of 40 teachers) were categorized within the Advanced Level (25-34 points), suggesting that although they have a moderate grasp of intercultural awareness, there is still room for improvement in certain areas. Interestingly, none of the teachers scored within the Basic Level (15-24 points),

meaning that all participants demonstrated at least some foundational understanding of cultural competence. This is a positive indication that English educators in Gorontalo already integrate cultural aspects into their teaching practices to some extent. However, those in the Advanced Level may benefit from further training or professional development to deepen their intercultural engagement.

These findings align with the descriptive statistics of the three key components: Cultural Self-Awareness (CSA), Cultural-Specific Knowledge (CSI), and Sociolinguistic Awareness (SLA) which were used as indicators of intercultural competence to measure the Intercultural Awareness (IA) level.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total CSA Score	40	10	15	13.17	1.599
Total CSI Score	40	8	15	12.05	2.253
Total SLA Score	40	10	15	13.30	1.652
Total of CSA, CSI, and SLA	40	29	45	38.53	4.852
Valid N (listwise)	40				

The Total CSA Score represents the level of cultural self-awareness among the 40 respondents. The scores ranged from a minimum of 10 to a maximum of 15, with an average (mean) score of 13.17 and a standard deviation of 1.599. This suggested that most respondents have a relatively high

level of self-awareness regarding cultural influences in their teaching. Further, the Total CSI Score reflects respondents' knowledge of specific cultural aspects, including students' backgrounds, traditions, and values. This dimension recorded the lowest mean score (12.05) among the three components, with a wider range of scores,

from 8 to 15, and a higher standard deviation of 2.253 compared to CSA. The higher standard deviation indicated that responses were more varied, meaning some teachers had strong cultural-specific knowledge while others showed gaps in this area.

The Total SLA Score measures teachers' sociolinguistic awareness, or their ability to recognize and adapt their language use based on cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom. The results showed a minimum score of 10 and a maximum score of 15, with a mean of 13.30 and a standard deviation of 1.652. This indicated that, on average, teachers demonstrated the highest competence in this area compared to CSA and CSI.

The Total CSA, CSI, and SLA Score represents the overall cultural competence of the respondents by combining all three dimensions. The total scores ranged from a minimum of 29 to a maximum of 45, with an average of 38.53 and a standard deviation of 4.852. The higher standard deviation in this category suggested that there is greater variation in the overall cultural competence levels among teachers. This indicated that

English teachers in Gorontalo have demonstrated a generally good level of cultural self-awareness and sociolinguistic awareness. However, cultural-specific knowledge shows greater variability among teachers. This suggested that while teachers are generally aware of their own cultural influences and adept at adapting language, their knowledge of specific cultural backgrounds varies.

B. Findings of The Influences of Demographic Factors on Intercultural Awareness Level

The variations in teachers' level of intercultural awareness were analysed based on demographic factors such as age, gender, educational background, teaching experience, place of origin, school level (junior or senior high), school location (urban or rural), and multicultural class size. These analyses remain focused on CSA, CSI, and SLA components.

• Demographic Factors influences on CSA

Table 2. Demographic Factors influences on CSA

FACTORS	CATEGORY	IA LEVEL			INTERPRETATION
		BASIC	ADVANCED	INTERCULTURAL	
Age	20-29 years	0%	29%	71%	CSA tends to increase with age
	30-39 years	0%	25%	75%	
	40-49 years	0%	27%	73%	
	50-59 years	0%	0%	100%	
Gender	Male	0%	9%	91%	Male teachers show more uniformity in high CSA, while female teachers show more variation
	Female	0%	31%	69%	
Educational background	Bachelor	0%	27%	73%	Higher education may contribute to greater CSA
	Master	0%	20%	80%	
	Doctor	0%	0%	0%	
Teachers' origin	Gorontalo	0%	26%	74%	Teachers from outside Gorontalo may possess higher CSA
	outside	0%	17%	83%	
School level	Junior (SMP)	0%	27%	73%	SMA teachers show a slightly higher percentage at the Intercultural level.
	Senior (SMA)	0%	18%	82%	
School location	Urban	0%	33%	67%	Teachers in transitional areas show a substantially higher percentage at the Intercultural level
	Transitional	0%	12%	88%	
	Rural	0%	0%	0%	
Teaching	< 3 years	0%	25%	75%	CSA tends to increase

experience	3 – 5 years	0%	33.3%	66.7%	with teaching experience
	> 5 years	0%	24%	76%	
Class size	< 3 members	0%	11%	89%	Smaller classes correlate with higher CSA
	3-5 members	0%	23%	77%	
	> 5 members	0%	56%	44%	

The analysis of demographic factors revealed that age, gender, educational background, original place of residence, teaching experience, and class size all appear to influence teachers' cultural self-awareness. However, it indicated that teaching experience and class size appear to be the most influential factors affecting teachers' cultural self-awareness (CSA). CSA tends to increase with more years of teaching experience, suggesting that practical experience fosters greater self-reflection and cultural awareness. Conversely, teachers with smaller class

sizes tend to demonstrate higher CSA, possibly because smaller classes allow for more individualized interaction with students, promoting deeper engagement with diverse cultural backgrounds. In contrast, gender influenced less in CSA, indicating both male and female teachers generally demonstrate relatively high levels of cultural self-awareness.

• Demographic Factors influences on CSI

Table 3. Demographic Factors influences on CSI

FACTORS	CATEGORY	IA LEVEL			INTERPRETATION
		BASIC	ADVANCED	INTERCULTURAL	
Age	20-29 years	0%	29%	71%	CSI tends to increase with age
	30-39 years	0%	25%	75%	
	40-49 years	0%	27%	73%	
	50-59 years	0%	0%	100%	
Gender	Male	0%	9%	91%	Male teachers show a stronger tendency towards higher CSI scores, while female teachers' scores are more varied
	Female	0%	31%	69%	
Educational background	Bachelor	0%	27%	73%	Teachers with a Bachelor's degree are more represented in the highest CSI category, but teachers with a Master's degree show a higher minimum level of CSI
	Master	0%	20%	80%	
	Doctor	0%	0%	0%	
Teachers' origin	Gorontalo	0%	26%	74%	Teachers from outside Gorontalo tend to have slightly higher CSI scores
	outside	0%	17%	83%	
School level	Junior (SMP)	0%	28%	72%	CSI is higher in SMA teachers, potentially influenced by exposure to more complex cultural topics in the curriculum
	Senior (SMA)	0%	18%	82%	
School location	Urban	0%	33%	67%	Teaching in transitional areas correlates with higher CSI
	Transitional	0%	12%	88%	
	Rural	0%	0%	0%	
Teaching experience	< 3 years	0%	25%	75%	CSI tends to increase with teaching experience, with the most experienced teachers demonstrating the highest scores
	3 – 5 years	0%	33.3%	66.7%	
	> 5 years	0%	24%	76%	

Class size	< 3 members	0%	11%	89%	Teachers with smaller class sizes tend to demonstrate higher CSI
	3-5 members	0%	23%	77%	
	> 5 members	0%	56%	44%	

The analysis of demographic factors revealed that age, gender, educational background, original place of residence, teaching experience, and class size all appear to influence teachers' cultural-specific information (CSI). However, it indicated that teaching experience and class size appear to be the most influential factors affecting teachers' CSI. CSI tends to increase with more years of teaching experience, suggesting that practical experience fosters greater understanding and application of students' cultural

backgrounds. Conversely, teachers with smaller class sizes tend to demonstrate higher CSI, possibly because smaller classes allow for more individualized interaction with students, promoting deeper engagement with diverse cultural backgrounds. In contrast, while variations exist, gender and educational background influenced less in CSI.

• Demographic Factors influences on SLA

Table 4. Demographic Factors influences on SLA

FACTORS	CATEGORY	IA LEVEL			INTERPRETATION
		BASIC	ADVANCED	INTERCULTURAL	
Age	20-29 years	0%	29%	71%	SLA tends to increase with age
	30-39 years	0%	25%	75%	
	40-49 years	0%	27%	73%	
	50-59 years	0%	0%	100%	
Gender	Male	0%	9%	91%	Male teachers tend to show higher SLA than female teachers
	Female	0%	31%	69%	
Educational background	Bachelor	0%	27%	73%	Master's degree holders tend to have slightly higher SLA
	Master	0%	20%	80%	
	Doctor	0%	0%	0%	
Teachers' origin	GORONTALO	0%	26%	74%	Teachers from outside the region may have slightly higher SLA
	outside	0%	17%	83%	
School level	Junior (SMP)	0%	28%	72%	SMA teachers tend to show slightly higher SLA than SMP teachers
	Senior (SMA)	0%	18%	82%	
School location	Urban	0%	33%	67%	Transitional areas tend to have teachers with higher SLA than urban areas
	Transitional	0%	12%	88%	
	Rural	0%	0%	0%	
Teaching experience	< 3 years	0%	25%	75%	More experience correlates with higher SLA
	3 – 5 years	0%	33.3%	66.7%	
	> 5 years	0%	24%	76%	
Class size	< 3 members	0%	11%	89%	Smaller classes are linked to higher SLA in teachers
	3-5 members	0%	23%	77%	
	> 5 members	0%	56%	44%	

The analysis of demographic factors revealed that age, gender, educational background, original place of residence, teaching experience, and class size all appear to influence teachers' sociolinguistic awareness (SLA). However, it indicated that teaching experience and class size appear to

be the most influential factors affecting teachers' SLA. SLA tends to increase with more years of teaching experience, suggesting that practical experience fosters greater sociolinguistic awareness. Conversely, teachers with smaller class sizes tend to demonstrate higher SLA,

possibly because smaller classes allow for more individualized interaction with students, promoting deeper engagement with diverse cultural backgrounds. In contrast, gender influenced less in SLA, indicating both male and female teachers generally demonstrate relatively high levels of sociolinguistic awareness.

DISCUSSION

The integration of intercultural awareness in English language teaching (ELT) is crucial for ensuring students to develop both linguistic proficiency and cultural competence. Language and culture are inherently connected, and cultural understanding deepens comprehension by acknowledging the intrinsic link between language and its cultural context ^[14]. Incorporating intercultural awareness into ELT is not merely an added dimension but a fundamental aspect that enhances students' ability to use the language effectively in a globalized world. This interconnectedness of language and culture extends beyond basic comprehension, fostering empathy and intercultural understanding ^[14]. By exposing learners to diverse cultural perspectives, students are encouraged to step outside their comfort zones and view the world through different lenses. This can involve exploring literature, films, music, and traditions from various cultures, cultivating an appreciation for the richness and diversity of human experience. Through these encounters, learners develop the ability to recognize and respect cultural differences, laying the groundwork for constructive dialogue and collaboration in a globalized world.

These considerations lead to the notion of intercultural awareness, which is a conscious understanding of how culturally-based forms, practices, and frames of experience influence intercultural communication, along with the ability to apply this understanding flexibly and context-specifically in real-time interactions ^[11]. Thus, intercultural awareness is not a completely new concept but rather the highest level of cultural awareness,

encompassing the fundamental features of the cultural awareness framework ^[15].

The study's findings reiterated that English teachers in Gorontalo generally exhibit a high degree of intercultural awareness, with 75% of respondents categorized at the "intercultural" level and 25% remaining at the "advanced" level. These results implied that most teachers possess the ability to view cultures as dynamic, diverse, and emergent, thereby enabling speakers to navigate the fluidity of intercultural communication ^[11]. However, while many teachers demonstrate an awareness of cultural integration, there is still potential for growth, particularly in the depth of cultural knowledge and its application in classroom settings.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the level of teachers' intercultural awareness towards students' cultural diversity in language teaching, focusing on English teachers in junior and senior high schools in Gorontalo. Grounded in Baker's framework ^[9] for classifying teachers' intercultural awareness (Basic, Advanced, and Intercultural) and utilizing Deardorff's Intercultural Knowledge and Competence model ^[8], the research aimed to assess teachers' capacity to recognize, understand, and engage with the cultural diversity present in their multicultural classrooms. The Intercultural Knowledge and Competence framework was operationalized through three dimensions: Cultural Self-Awareness (CSA), reflecting an understanding of teachers' own cultural influences on teaching; Cultural-Specific Knowledge (CSI), assessing teachers' knowledge of students' specific cultural backgrounds; and Sociolinguistic Awareness (SLA), measuring teachers' ability to adapt language use across diverse cultural settings. The results indicated that English teachers in Gorontalo generally demonstrate a foundational level of intercultural competence, with a majority of teachers (75%) exhibiting strong level of intercultural awareness. This competence is reflected in their Cultural Self-Awareness

(CSA), indicating an understanding of how their own cultural identities influence their teaching, and in their Sociolinguistic Awareness (SLA), where they show proficiency in adapting language across cultural contexts. However, there's a notable variability in Cultural-Specific Knowledge (CSI), suggesting that while teachers are aware of cultural diversity, some may lack comprehensive knowledge of their students' specific cultural backgrounds. This highlights the need for targeted professional development to enhance teachers' ability to integrate cultural understanding into their teaching practices.

The analysis of demographic factors reveals several influences on teachers' intercultural competence. Teaching experience and class size are particularly salient across CSA, CSI, and SLA. Increased teaching experience generally correlates with higher competence, indicating that practical experience fosters intercultural growth. Smaller class sizes are also associated with enhanced performance, likely due to greater opportunities for individualized interaction with students. Age tends to positively correlate with competence, especially in CSA and CSI, while gender influences score distribution, with male teachers often showing more uniform proficiency. Educational background and original place of residence also play a role, though less decisively. In conclusion, while multiple factors shape intercultural competence, teaching experience and class size appear to be predominant.

Declaration by Authors

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