

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of Study

According to Duncan and Parker (2018), culture and language are two things in society that are related to each other and cannot be separated. Therefore, in language learning, it is also important to understand the culture. In addition, according to Er (2006) as cited in Duncan and Parker (2018), having cultural understanding can allow us to be able to think in the target language. In intercultural communication, there are two factors that have a very important role in determining the success or failure of intercultural communication. These two factors are intercultural competence and intercultural sensitivity. As we know, language functions as a communication tool. Based on this, learning English as a foreign language needs to include cultural knowledge in the process. This is because in intercultural communication and the learning process there is a clash of cultures. The interaction between two or more people with different cultural backgrounds is called intercultural communication. Therefore, both factors play a very important role.

According to Koch and Takashima (2021), intercultural sensitivity is a person's ability to recognize, respect, and embrace diverse cultures. Someone who has intercultural sensitivity has an understanding that there are variations in culture. Based on the relationship between culture and language, culture is important to be involved in language learning. This is

also in line with Allah's words in the Qur'an, found in Q.S Ar-Ruum verse 22:

مِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالاخْتِلاَفُ اَللِّسِنَاتِكُمْ وَاَلْوَانِكُمْ اِنَّ فِي ذٰلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ

According to Surah Ar-Ruum verse 22 above, Allah created the heavens and the earth and differences in language and skin color are signs of His greatness. This difference should not be a barrier to getting to know each other and establishing communication. Because actually Allah created differences to learn from each other, complement and respect each other (M. Quraish Shihab, Tafsir Al-Mishbah).

Language as a medium for communication, especially in this case is English, which is an international language, is a communication tool to connect more broadly with the world community with very many and diverse cultural backgrounds. In this study, the author explores the intercultural sensitivity of English language education students, so that it can be used as a reference for future research sources and as a perspective in teaching English. Culture as a part of social life should be involved in language learning. However, in English language learning so far there is no direct involvement of intercultural interaction. In language learning in general, cultural elements are only involved in theory. In this case, Kos and Takashima (2021), state that English as a foreign language (EFL) classes cannot represent language learning that involves intercultural interaction. However, cultural understanding can be found in specialized courses such as the Cross Cultural Understanding (CCU) course. In this study, exploring

the intercultural sensitivity of students majoring in English at UIN Antasari Banjarmasin who are studying CCU courses or at least one year after studying CCU courses.

The explanation above shows the close relationship between culture and language and the urgency to involve culture in language learning. Not only that, this explanation also shows the importance of having intercultural sensitivity, which influences the effectiveness and success of communication. A person's inability to appreciate existing cultural differences can result in failure in intercultural communication. This is reinforced by Kosh and Takashima (2021), stating that apart from knowledge of English as a language, intercultural communication skills are also needed to build effective communication both with individuals and communities. Having intercultural sensitivity is very important to avoid judging the person you are talking to. An attitude that judges the person you are talking to can develop into negative behavior that results in losses such as violations of cultural ethics, and other attitudes that can trigger conflict between individuals, groups or even on a much larger scale. Understanding cultural history and the ability to appreciate it can minimize the occurrence of conflict. Tuncen and Parker (2018), conducted research with the aim of finding out whether intercultural sensitivity can be obtained through courses. The results of the study show that the contribution of intercultural communication courses to the development of intercultural sensitivity among students is quite significant. Participants in this study revealed in

interviews that the activities carried out during the course contributed a lot to increasing their awareness of the components of intercultural communication and to the development of their intercultural sensitivity.

Thus, by using qualitative methods and collecting data through in-depth interviews, researchers consider the importance of exploring the intercultural sensitivity of students majoring in English. In this study, researchers explored the intercultural sensitivity of students majoring in English who are currently studying CCU or at least one year after studying CCU, to see the extent to which CCU courses contribute to students' intercultural sensitivity. This study is valuable as a perspective in viewing the intercultural sensitivity of English students who have previously studied CCU. It is hoped that this study can be used as a perspective in the application of cultural elements in learning English, with the aim of increasing intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communication skills of English students at UIN Antasari Banjarmasin.

## **B. Research Question**

1. How does English students at UIN Antasari Banjarmasin intercultural sensitivity after taking CCU classes?

## **C. Objectives of Study**

1. Exploring the intercultural sensitivity of English students at UIN Antasari Banjarmasin who are currently studying CCU or at least one year after studying CCU courses.

2. Exploring the challenges faced by English language students related to their cross-cultural sensitivity, whether ethnocentric or ethnorelative.

#### **D. Significance of Study**

##### **1. For Lecturers:**

- a. Inform the importance of intercultural sensitivity to achieve successful intercultural communication.
- b. Giving some views about the relationship between language and culture, this research can be used as a consideration in the learning process in CCU classes and in English classes.

##### **2. For the Students:**

- a. Knowing the definitions and differences between intercultural communication, intercultural competence, and intercultural sensitivity.
- b. Building students' awareness of the importance of having intercultural sensitivity, which determines the success of communication. Increasing students' awareness that having intercultural sensitivity can make it easier for them to communicate with native speakers, study abroad or for other purposes.

#### **E. Definition of Key Terms**

##### **1. Intercultural Sensitivity**

Intercultural sensitivity is one of the elements in intercultural communication competence. Meanwhile, intercultural sensitivity according to Chen and Starosta (1998) as cited in Mighani and

Moghadam (2019), intercultural sensitivity is a person's ability to accept, understand and give appreciation to cultural differences. What is meant by cultural differences here is that they are seen from the characteristics of a culture, namely, race, religion, food, habits, way of dressing, and gender roles. In general, through these aspects, differences are found. The culture in this research is the source language culture (Indonesia) and the target language culture (Native English speaking countries).

## **2. Cultural Prejudice**

Cultural characteristics which include race, religion, food, habits, ways of dressing and gender roles often become prejudices which then become an inhibiting factor in intercultural communication, this is called cultural prejudice. According to Barnlund (1998), Holiday, Hyde & Kullman (2004) as cited in Morandi and Gabanchi (2019), in intercultural communication there are stereotypes in it. In this study, researchers used cultural prejudice which was previously stated by Barnlund, Holiday, Hyde & Kullman as the main reference to see whether English students at UIN Antasari Banjarmasin had prejudice against these cultural characteristics.