

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the background of the study which will clarify the reason why the researcher attempted to conduct the study. This chapter explains the significance of the study to inform the advantages of the study. It will be followed by the scope and limitation which explains about where the data will take and what the research focuses on. In the last part is definition of key terms which provides the reader about the content of study.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Nowadays, globalization influences universities around the world through market competition. The growth of International education in Indonesia has always increased every year. Internationalization of education has become a significant development in Indonesian universities. According to data released by UNESCO in 2013, the number of International students in Indonesia as many as 5,388 students increased to 7,072 students in 2010. Even the latest number reported by the Head of the Bureau of Planning and Foreign Cooperation (BPKLN) of the Ministry of Education and Culture said in 2016 10,000 International students are studying in Indonesia. In addition, the Ministry of Research and Technology and Higher Education (KEMRISTEK DIKTI) also targets that by 2019 the number of International students in Indonesia can increase to 20,000 students.

As we know, learning a foreign language is one of the best ways to make people aware of the outside world and culture. Any country or person planned to

operate globally in accordance with current global trends can benefit socially, economically and personally (Chinese National Development and Reform Commission, 2015). Indonesian universities offer short-term or long-term programs to give International students the opportunity to learn Indonesian in this country and also continue to improve the quality of education and services to International students.

However, because of different social backgrounds, social systems, and customs, people have difficulty in understanding and communicating each other (Petrakis, 2013). This is also a problem that makes it difficult for teachers and students. It is known that teaching or learning a foreign language cannot be only linguistic skills such as phonology, morphology, vocabulary or syntax (Forsman, 2012). Language learning and target culture cannot be realistically separated. Mak (2010) asserts that language learning is a deep conceptual activity that involves explicit analysis of language and culture.

Therefore, Intercultural Awareness is needed for foreign language learners to promote intercultural communication competencies (Leask, 2009). Bodycott and Lai (2012) mention that foreign language students must be aware of actively combining their own culture with the target culture. Colvin et al (2013) show that Intercultural Awareness helps students expand their minds, increase tolerance and achieve cultural empathy and sensitivity. Intercultural Awareness is the awareness and ability to apply intercultural conceptions in practice in real-time cross-cultural contexts (Baker, 2012). In addition, according to Cakir (2006), Intercultural Awareness in the EFL class is very important. Learning to understand foreign cultures will help students from other languages to use words and expressions

more skillfully and authentically; to understand the appropriate level of language and situation; to act naturally with people from other cultures, while recognizing and accepting their different reactions, and to help speakers of other languages feel at home in the culture in that country. Thus, Intercultural Awareness is a learning process where we become adapted to the target language and cultural situations and principles (Leung & Chiu, 2010). In foreign language teaching and learning, awareness of the target language and culture needs to be carefully considered. Otherwise, the potential for cross-cultural communication problems arises from a lack of conversation or behavior that cannot be understood together.

Therefore, this study was to investigate the perceptions of EFL Thailand learners toward the significance of Intercultural Awareness in EFL teaching at Indonesian universities, including Muhammadiyah Gresik University, Muhammadiyah Surabaya University, Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo University, Muhammadiyah Ponorogo University, Muhammadiyah Jember University and Muhammadiyah Malang University. The aim of the study was to investigate the perceptions of EFL Thailand learners toward the significance of Intercultural Awareness in EFL teaching at Indonesian universities.

There were some previous studies that talked about Intercultural Awareness whereas none was working in Indonesia with the subject are Thailand learners in EFL teaching and learning in some Indonesian universities, those are, first, a research by Webb (2014), entitled “Cultural and Intercultural Awareness of International students at an Australian University”. This research was focused to examine the issues concerning cultural and Intercultural Awareness of International students at an Australian university. In collecting the data of this

study, the researcher used questionnaire to 50 Chinese students and 50 students of other nationalities including European and Middle-Eastern students.

Second, a research by Hoa and Vien (2019), entitled “The Integration of Intercultural Education into Teaching English What Vietnamese Teachers Do and Say”. This research was focused to what extent upper secondary school teachers perceived and practiced intercultural integration prior the educational reform. In collecting the data of this study, the researcher used questionnaire to 101 participants which is teachers and open-ended question to get in-depth information.

Third, a thesis by William Baker the students of University of Southampton year 2009, entitled “Intercultural Awareness and Intercultural Communication Through English An Investigation of Thai English Language Users in Higher Education”. This thesis was focused on finding out the role of Intercultural Awareness in intercultural communication through English. In this thesis, the researcher used a questionnaire and interview to undergraduate Arts students at a government university in Thailand.

Fourth, a thesis entitled “Views and Attitudes of Staff and Students towards the Significance of Intercultural Awareness in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning in an Australian University Context” by Yanjun Wang, the students of University of Tasmania year 2014. This thesis focused on investigation teachers’ and students’ beliefs and understandings of the significance of Intercultural Awareness in foreign language teaching and learning in a university context. In this thesis, the researcher used a questionnaire and interview to 319 participants, including 290 students and 29 teaching staff

The last, a research by Wang (2019), entitled “Views and Attitudes of Intercultural Awareness in Chinese Teaching and Learning in Shanxi Provincial Universities Context”. This research was focused to know academic staffs’ and overseas students’ perceptions toward the significance of Intercultural Awareness in Chinese teaching and learning as foreign language of Shanxi Provincial universities. The participants of this research are 273 students and 52 staffs took part in the questionnaire and 25 of them accepted semi-structured interview students.

From some previous studies above, there is no researcher obtained the data through giving questionnaire to investigate EFL Thailand learners' perception of Intercultural Awareness in EFL teaching at Indonesian universities. This has aroused writers’ interest to take part in this research, focusing on Thailand learners’ in EFL teaching at Indonesian universities.

Considering the reasons above, such as Intercultural Awareness for International students in Indonesia is really important especially in EFL teaching. Furthermore, based on some previous research that talked about Intercultural Awareness whereas none was working in Indonesia and there is no subject of research that are Thailand learners in EFL teaching in Indonesian universities, so the writer interests to investigate EFL Thailand learners’ perception toward the significance of Intercultural Awareness in EFL teaching at Indonesian universities through this study entitled “**Thailand Learners’ Perception of Intercultural Awareness in English Foreign Language Teaching at East Java Muhammadiyah Universities**”.

## **1.2 Research Question**

This study try to investigate learners' perception in EFL teaching at Indonesian universities. Specifically, the researcher tries to answer the following question:

1. What is EFL Thailand learners' perception toward the significance of Intercultural Awareness in EFL teaching at Indonesian universities?

The researcher tries to answer the problem by giving a questionnaire then classifying the result of questionnaire using a Likert Scale.

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

The objective of this research is:

1. To investigate EFL Thailand learners' perception toward the significance of Intercultural Awareness in EFL teaching at Indonesian universities.

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

To know more about how the research gets significances, here the researcher states below:

### **1. Theoretical Significance**

- a. The result of this research can be useful to the theory of Intercultural Awareness in EFL teaching.
- b. The result of this research can be useful as the reference for next researcher who wants to conduct a research on the same or similar topic as in this research.

### **2. Practical Significance**

- a. This research helps the lectures in finding out EFL Thailand learners' perception toward the significance of Intercultural Awareness in EFL teaching at Indonesian universities
- b. This research helps the Indonesian and International students to improve their Intercultural Awareness in EFL teaching at Indonesian universities especially for International students

### **1.5 Scope and Limitation**

This research focuses on the significance of Intercultural Awareness in EFL teaching at Indonesian universities based on EFL Thailand learners' perception at Indonesian universities.

### **1.6 Definition of Key Terms**

To avoid misunderstanding of key terms used in this research, therefore it will be defined as below:

1. Intercultural Awareness is understanding of the role of culture particularly the similarities and differences cultures between Thailand and Indonesia in EFL teaching context.
2. EFL teaching is teaching about English as foreign language that taught in Indonesian universities.
3. EFL Thailand learners is Thailand students who learned EFL teaching at English Education in Indonesia.